January 12, 1993

Dear Ms. Levine,

I am a mother of two daughters aged 15 and 5. I live in Colorado Springs, Colorado, which is the home to among other things, Amendment 2. As I am sure you are aware this is the amendment which limits gay rights regarding discrimination. As a mother I have been moved to become involved in fighting this injustice. I feel that through education we have a chance to change people's perceptions and one way to educate is through getting out accurate information. All I can do is let others know what is actually going on, as I see things. So I thought that REDBOOK might be interested in printing a mother's point of view regarding this issue. I am aware that the rest of the country is getting bits and pieces of information but I'm not sure that many have had the opportunity to read the amendment. This is important in understanding how the people of Colorado could have passed this amendment. I'm hoping you will see value in printing my piece but if not perhaps it will encourage you to do some other treatment of the issue. I will hope to hear from you.

Sincerely,

Patricia Tolle

Neither the State of Colorado, through any of it's branches or departments nor any of it's agencies, political subdivisions, municipalities, or school districts, shall enact, adopt or enforce any statute, regulation, ordinance or policy whereby homosexual, lesbian or bisexual orientation,conduct, practices or relationships shall constitute or otherwise be the basis of or entitle any person or class of persons to have or claim any minority status, quota preferences, protected status or claim of discrimination.

Definitely one of the longest and most confusing run-on sentences I have ever seen. I know that this is not the usual type of " Mother's Story". For me, however, these times represent the most critical crisis a mother can face, the disintegration of a secure and FREE future for my children. You see, I live in Colorado Springs, Colorado, one of the most beautiful areas in the country. We are nestled at the foot of Pike's Peak and it was upon reaching the summit of this formidable mountain that Katherine Lee Bates was inspired to write "America the Beautiful" . And yet, "sweet land of liberty" it is not.

On November 3, 1992, Colorado voters passed an amendment to our state Constitution which, in effect, opens the door to legalized discrimination against homosexuals. This in itself is cause enough for grave concern, but in my opinion,the consequences of this political action have the capacity to negatively impact each and every one of us across the country. We in Colorado have shown how easy it is to tamper with and revoke basic American freedoms.

Many people within Colorado and throughout the rest of the United States think

that this amendment simply barred homosexuals from achieving "special protected or minority status", similar to African Americans or women. In truth, there was never any movement in Colorado to create quotas or grant homosexuals, lesbians or bisexuals minority status. There was, however, an effort to include the words sexual orientation as clarification of individuals already covered by the fourteenth amendment. It seems that this is an ongoing process by which we attempt to improve the understandability of our constitution. At different times we have sought to single out women, African Americans, single parents, married couples, the physically and mentally challenged and children, as those whose rights need to be specifically validated. This has always occurred when circumstances have shown that a particular group's basic rights are being overlooked or abused. A person's sexual orientation does not alter their right to earn a living, have a home or live a free life. And yet, once amendment 2 goes into effect a homosexual can be fired, evicted and denied access to any number of experiences simply because of his homosexuality. This is discrimination, and in Colorado "homosexual,lesbian or bisexual orientation" cannot "be the basis of a claim of discrimination". There are many other words within this amendment, yet in my mind they are just window dressing to obscure the restriction of rights for an entire group of Americans. I believe that we have begun the undermining of our most basic freedoms, the right to equality.

I have become involved in this issue for two reasons. First, Amendment 2 was born in my hometown of Colorado Springs. It was conceived by a small but influential group who utilized constitutional lawyers to draft a confusing and wordy document. The media was used to exploit the fears and misconceptions of the public. These are

tactics which can be used by anyone to shape and manipulate this country towards a specific ideology at the expense of the many other ideologies that make up the United States.

The second, and most important reason for my involvement is my two beautiful and wonderfully different daughters. Each day I am thankful for the joy and growth that their individuality brings into my life. It is my opinion, that on a larger scale it is this same diversity that makes this country strong. My children deserve to inherit a nation that is still a safe haven for "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". A place where they can pray to the God of their choice or if it is their belief, to no God and to express their opinions without fear of reprisals.

I feel very strongly that the determination of basic civil and human rights should never be left to the whims of the voting public. We are all too often swayed by our fears and prejudices and thus overlook the long term consequences of our actions. We should only amend our constitution, state or federal, when every effort has been made to determine that the amendment will substantially improve the document. We must trust our system of government and ensure that it remains responsible to the people by electing honest and dedicated representatives who will legislate and govern fairly with the Constitution as their guide. I do not believe that we are objective enough as a people to be entrusted with the "justice for ALL" aspect of our government.

Lastly, I am greatly disturbed by the increasing talk of boycott. I understand the need to make a stand and to express disapproval of this amendment, but I feel it is only though education that true change will be accomplished. I'm not sure that Hitler

would have been swayed by a boycott in response to the atrocities being committed in World War II Germany. I do feel, however, that a world-wide media blitz of the horrible truths, thus exposing the evidence of torture and extermination, might have brought about an earlier end to his reign of terror. And though I am aware that what has occurred in Colorado and is being planned for other states is not as overtly evil as the systematic elimination of an entire race of people, it is a threat to the very lifeblood of our nation, namely FREEDOM. Please let us join together to change the climate of fear and intolerance which made the passing of this amendment possible. Let us make it our responsibility to encourage every American voter to look past their own discomfort and bias so that they may truly understand and act upon their duty to vote in a thoughtful and educated manner. The future of all of our children is at stake, any one of them could be part of the next group to offend and be targeted. Do we really want to take the chance that what we do today won't haunt us tomorrow?